

Friendship's Crown of Verse



O. C. AURINGER

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FRIENDSHIP'S CROWN OF VERSE

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O. C. AURINGER

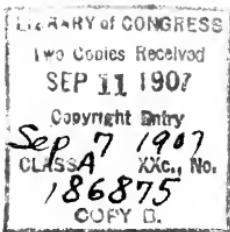
Author of *The Road-Builders*, *William McKinley*, etc.



Clinton, New York

GEORGE WILLIAM BROWNING

1907



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CONTENTS

A DESPOILED DAWN	5
DEAD ON THE HEIGHTS	9
A GLANCED ARROW	10
LOVE'S TRAIL OF GRIEF	11
'THE INSATIATE SOUL	12
BATTLES TRANSFERRED	13
TIME, THE MAN-BUILDER	14
A WIDOWED PARADISE	15
THE WANING SOUL	16
THE REILLUMING LOVE	17
THE REFORMER	18
IMPERFECTION AND TRIUMPH	19
THE HOST AND THE IDLE TALENTS	20
THE HUNTSMAN	21
THE FINER LAW	22
THE MERCHANTMAN	23
LOVER AND WARRIOR	24
HEART OF THE REPUBLIC	25
THE DUAL LIFE	27
GLIMPSES OF THE GOAL	32

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CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

PARADISAL GUARDS	35
THE CORE OF BEAUTY	36
FICTION AND TRUTH	37
THE KINGDOM OF NIGHT	38
THE DREAM	39
FRIENDLY RIVALS	40
SPRING RAIN	41
WOMAN	43
PAN-MINSTREL	44
THE ROSE SPEAKS	45
POSTSCRIPT	52

Friendship's Crown of Verse



A DESPOILED DAWN

“Come into the temple of morning,
But softly with temperate feet,
Undoing within you all scorning,
All hatred and anger and heat,
For the portals are holy with warning
That lead to this chosen retreat.

“After the ebbing and flowing
Of dream-tides both bitter and sweet,
The tolling of death-bells, the blowing
Of bugles of joy in the street,
And the vision of seraph-plumes growing
From a fiend’s wrinkled shoulders complete;

“And all the wild joys and the sorrows
Of a region fantastic and strange,
Where todays have no kin with tomorrows,
Whose lords are Unreason and Change,
Come, arise ! for the spirit that borrows
From morning soon ceases to range.

“Bid farewell to Sir Sleep and all dreaming,
Let your soul say farewell to the wight ;
Bow him out of your courts with his seeming
Bonhommie as comrade forthright ;
You have drunk with him moonbeams in streaming
Full cups from the flagons of Night.”

"Twas the voice of the dew-sprinkled priestess
Who comes in advance of the sun,
Her high-priest. Like foam flakes when ceased is
The noon from deep waters that run,
Are her feet leading up where the feast is
That begins with the darkness undone!

O cool feet and lovely ! And speaking
Again to me — "Come from your bed !
The temple's high minstrels are wreaking
Their songs on the court air," she said,
"Till the gold priest responds to their seeking
In his mitre of heavenly red."

One firm hand she raised like a flower
Toward the clouds that hung looped in the east —
"They are curtains through which in his power
Ere long shall reissue the priest ;
Yonder hill pointing up like a tower
Is the altar ; the incense " — she ceased,

And smiling then breathed on me sweetly,
Like a wind half in earnest, half jest ;
Then a thousand warm odors rose fleetly
From the east and the south and the west,
And gathered and mixed till completely
In one piercing attar compressed.

But the north has no odors, and therefore
 He sent forth a young wind instead,
Whose wings took the incense up, wherefore
 It was strewn under feet and o'erhead,
Till it flowed in thin lines o'er the fair floor,
 And aloft in curled streamlets outspread.

And the priestess stood sober. She lifted
 Her head and her look to the east,
Where the cloud-curtains stirred and were rifted,
 And were changing, half crimsoned, half fleeced ;
And her peace was a spell. Like a gifted
 Tall sibyl her presence increased

Till "Behold, it is he," cried the goddess,
 (She is priestess and goddess in one)
And she rose in her height from her bodice
 Till a titaness' stature was done —
"Look ! look ! There his mitre — his rod is !
 'Tis the sun ! 'tis the sun ! 'tis the sun !"

Then down on me out of her splendor
 She smiled all triumphant, complete,
For she thought I would spring then to render
 What tribute of gladness was meet ;
But she changed when she saw me, all tender
 With tears, bowing down at her feet.

And she guessed not, for yet 'twas unspoken,
 The grief that so humbled my head —
“He is gone on whom sunrise has broken
 So often beside me !” I said.
“The comrade to whom I was yoken
 Through sundawns and sunsets, is fled.

“He is fled, and the morning shall never
 Again know the trace of his feet,
He is gone at a call sent to sever
 His soul from a vision so sweet :
Sealed up is his hearing forever
 From the dawn-music’s rapturous beat.

“He was one of a twain, I the other,
 Who stood for the dawn and the light,
And the hope and the music, as brother
 To brother lends joy in the fight.—
O the night has been ill thus to smother
 That heart in the flush of its might !

“He is gone who was spirit and feeling :
 They remain who cannot understand ;
To them is the sky but a ceiling,
 The bright earth but granite and sand ;
For time’s old disorder what healing ?
 For the warrior what strength to his hand ?”

DEAD ON THE HEIGHTS

All men have marked below life's mountain tops
How broad and varied was his soul's domain,
With earnest crags, the fruitful fair campaign,
The hollows brimmed with warmth, the cloistered
copse ;
But few have seen what height on height outcrops
To stretch that region heavenward o'er the plain ;
Or known how native to his ear that strain
Which hymns the Highest through a thousand stops.

Not his the travail of some pilgrim wight
Who buys with pain a space whereon to spread
A narrow death-couch upon sacred sod.
Familiar there, he has but said "good night,"
And drawn around the curtain of his bed,
And laid him down upon the breast of God.

A GLANCED ARROW

Like parent birds in summer on a bough,
The nestlings having flown away in air,
I saw you side by side, a pleasant pair,
Courting content that genial hours allow
'Twixt then and winter. But I look, and now
Where are you? O the ruin everywhere!
Shattered the covert and the bower laid bare
Wherein you sealed with peace so rich a vow.

'Twas that dark hunter whom all men detest
Made all this waste! Grief sets before mine eyes
The cruel scene,—the heartless hunter's glee,
The shot, the fall, and o'er a lifeless breast
Tumult of fearful wings and piercing cries—
I too lament: that shot has wounded me.

LOVE'S TRAIL OF GRIEF

Bright bird of dawn, ambassador of May,
Robin, who sing'st from thine accustomed tree,
'Twas thou that gavest him the golden key
Each morn to gain the treasures of the day ;
'Twas thou didst set the tune of work or play
That led his steps up toil's acclivity,
Or round 'mid ways of young anemone
In spruce-spread haunts or pastures fresh and gay.

Did I mistake, or was it that I heard
But now a note of sorrow in thy song,
A wail for him that's gone ? Nay, O thou bird !
It was my heart that trailed that strain along
Through all my woven walk — the voice divine
Of inmost grief that I mistook for thine.

THE INSATIATE SOUL

His body was a bark superbly planned,
 Built for all seas and rigged with helm and sheet,
 To cleave a track amid the human fleet
That plies the waves where life's wide seas expand.
His soul the master was, whose pliant hand
 Drove the tall pinnace forth through wintry sleet,
 Or watery worlds of sunshine bland and sweet,
 High trafficker for bales on every strand.

Alas, the master's zeal has sunk the craft
 Too long and far adventured ! Deep she lies
 Drowned hull and spar beside her native mole.
The form through which his spirit wept and laughed,
 Toiled hard, did good, wrought virtue and grew
 wise,
 Here lies consumed by the insatiate soul.

BATTLES TRANSFERRED

A dozen paces from the shore descried,
The carven-pillared house which is his tomb
Gleams like a temple 'mid the hemlock gloom—
The hemlocks that he loved and glorified
With fine imaginings. Housed with his bride,
Whom the South slew and sent him pale with
doom,
He lies, world-wanderer, in that narrow room,
Unmindful of our hope betrayed, belied !

Belied? Even so, if Hope consort with dust ;
But no! if, joined to the fresh bridegroom Life,
Far off and hence on forward trails she flies !
'Tis but his bones these marbles hold in trust ;
He lives and laughs in some far glorious strife
Where man is still the theme of fresh emprise.

TIME, THE MAN-BUILDER

First rose a pencil of slow mist that drew
The wavering outlines of this little cape ;
Then came the builder Ocean with his crew,
And gave compacted substance and a shape ;
An age, and then the Glacier with his plane
Smoothed the harsh rock round to this pleasant
dome ;
And last the busy furnishers, the Rain,
Snow, Beams appeared, and lo, a fairy home !
And when 'twas o'er and finished didst thou come
And dwell two crowning decades, and art gone —
What ! all this long incalculable sum
Of time, to build one reign so soon withdrawn ?
Four seasons toil to make one June rose sweet ;
What ages, then, to crown man's life complete !

A WIDOWED PARADISE

Four seasons toil to make one June rose sweet —
Briefest of joys, soon scattered on the grass ! —
These wild cliffs touched with sunset ere it pass,
Remain as then. The small wharf at their feet
Still holds in gentle leash its quiet fleet
Of shallop on dark waters still as glass ;
That headland rising in its craggy mass
The straggling causeway's eager clutch to meet —
All are as then they were. But over all
There lies the tender sadness of a tomb,
The mournful memory of a faded grace,
An air of joys departed with the Fall —
'Tis that the rose of life has dropped its bloom,
And passed the light and genius of the place.

THE WANING SOUL

The rage for gold, the strife for power, the greed
 Of luxury — three vultures cursed of old —
He saw them ere he died, with pinions bold
Trail ominous shadows o'er his native mead.
He in his dying heart foreknew the deed
 Our eyes now see, the strife, the trampled mold,
 The treacherous coup, and Honor lying cold,
By foul things torn that wrangle while they feed !

O heart return ! Help us again to feel !
 In our love's heaven how few large hearts now
 burn !
Bring back the seeing eyes, our manhood's weal,
 Our vision withers, we no more discern ;
Restore us prayer our ailing hearts to heal,
 Prayer's fount doth fail among us — O return !

THE REILLUMING LOVE

Return O heart!—yet not in that same guise,
With that same presence once so fair to see,
Like some tall flagship sailing prosperously,
Flying o'er all the banner of emprise !
Come not as that imperial man, with size
And port heroic, molded in a free
Abounding nature's generosity,
Magnificent with intellectual eyes !

But come in some high, strange and splendid way
Out of thy new volitions, out of power,
Out of thy place among the circles seven !
Of thy new wisdom send us down some ray
Authentic, to rebuild our crumbling tower.
The arm that helps us most must help from
heaven !

THE REFORMER

The path of truth is paved with human hearts,
And he that treads it hears a sound arise
Of deep complaints and lamentable cries
Where round his feet a troubled throng upstarts.
“Why spoilest thou our rest?” mourns one, and darts
A look reproachful out of dream-fed eyes ;
“Ah, blind and cruel feet!” another sighs,
“Bringers of grief that nevermore departs !”

Hence o'er his soul that shadow of eclipse
Who oft the heartbreak bore, and shared the sting
Of such as bled beneath his ministry ;
And hence the marks of sorrow round the lips
Foredoomed to speak the inevitable thing
That cut him off from human sympathy.

IMPERFECTION AND TRIUMPH

He was not perfect—nay, the world brooks not
Perfection in her sons! Should one arise
Supreme above his fellows, great and wise,
For him the hated furnace seven times hot!
He groped in dreams of power with such as plot
How best to hold the earth and keep the skies,
But waking late flung off the weak disguise
And stood once more himself without a spot.

For always near, neglected not forgot,
His seraph-self, with oft-reproachful eyes,
Went bearing splendid arms of paradise;—
The angel of his youth, his years' first lot,
Soul of the lightning, hatred, scorn, disdain,
The immortal aspiration and the pain.

THE HOST AND THE IDLE TALENTS

He spread his tent within a lordly chase
Which oak and spurge indifferently share,
And made a feast and sat him down in place,
And bade all kinds, the crippled and the fair;
And there were fig-cakes laved with honey-dew,
And clusters giving perfume rich and faint,
And apples mellowed where the warm winds blew,
And musky wine in flagons carved and quaint.

And when the lamps winked dim, and all was o'er,
He rose and deftly robbed each nodding guest
Of that peculiar jewel he possessed,
To plump his robust wallet yet the more,
While from the deep blue cavern of the sky
Glanced through the tent-door many a diamond eye.

THE HUNTSMAN

Into the monarch's aged wood he came
With bow of gold, a huntsman keen and fleet ;
All creatures having life he counted game,
And harked the air for wings, the brake for feet ;
Of wildwood things he learned each feint and wile —
The noblest game he took with freest shaft ;
And such as lurk and hide did he beguile
With artful wisdom caught from their own craft.

Thou wert that huntsman, and the forest old,
God's good green world where thou didst walk in
glee ;
Thy knightly spirit was the bow of gold
That launched thy wide-shed shafts of charity ;
Thy prey thy fellows' hearts. So didst thou fare,
Seeking for good — to find it everywhere.

THE FINER LAW

I've seen him foremost in the rout of mirth
 What time the elfin bolts flew bright and fast,
I've seen his creature Humor leap to birth,
 And run his stride 'mid laughter rich and vast.
I've marked him when his thought soared like a bird
 That reaps the endless ether ; I have seen
The deep eyes lighten when his ire was stirred,
 And scorn run furrows round the lips serene.

Yet never have I known the frolic fire
 To shoot a single shaft intemperately,
Or pride make discord in his mind's clear choir,
 Or passion cloud his spirit's minstrelsy,
But everywhere apparent one could trace
 The finer law of gentleness and grace.

THE MERCHANTMAN

He was a merchant to the task addressed
Of bringing freight of gold from every land ;
Coin of all climes was current in his hand,
And yet he loved the home-stamped mint the best.
The first he spent with unreproachful zest,
And laughed to see its generous fruits expand ;
The last in stock and bond at his command,
He held, in fortune's treasures possessed.

Yet most unlike the miser of the tale,
Who starved through fear lest he should come to
want,
Whom strangers found and buried with a sneer,
He made each native talent to avail
To furnish forth the one dear home and haunt,
And crown its hearth with love and loving cheer.

LOVER AND WARRIOR

He loved his land with deep and noble love,
 He loved her men and women, kindred hearts ;
 His love was not unmindful of her arts, —
He called them irised pinions of the dove,
Plumes of the bird of peace o'erarched above
 The tumult of the millstones of her marts ;
 He loved her sword when that wild servant starts
Forth like a hand that flings away the glove
To seize some wrong and smite ! O if denied
 The battle and the warrior's wide renown
 Through some slow-plotting treason of the flesh,
Trod not his faith a field as wild and wide ?
 Toiled not his hope as grandly for the crown ?
 Rose not his ceaseless voice, a fountain clear
 and fresh ?

HEART OF THE REPUBLIC

I

New worlds are never won by cleverness,
Nor ever yet did wit transport a state;
And there are hurts no art can medicate,
And wrongs no spell of intellect redress.
Fail tongues and wisdom, powerless to possess
The eden closed to knockings of debate,
While impulse, blindly feeling, finds the gate,
And faith, cloud-footed, stumbles to success.
Not statecraft, but the universal heart
Full-flooded, throbbing toward a fairer sway,
Brings the new reign, the lordlier dynasty, —
As rapt Columbus, yearning o'er a chart,
Launched in a vision, groping for Cathay,
Fell on fresh empire in the western sea.

II

America, my heart's fair holy land,
Not few bold pilgrims of my blood have pressed
Thy sacred soil in freedom's generous quest;
And well I know what zeal behind the hand
Aimed the bright lance and swung the joyous brand
That sang on helm and harness! — that high zest
Which thrice thy splendid hosts, in honor drest,
Fired when the Paynim crescent lit thy strand!
Fierce Israel's hawk, Rome's falcon, and the wing
Of Moslem vulture, sinister of dye,
Have chased love's bird from Palestinian bowers;
Ah, may no like dark creatures ever spring
To hunt the lordly eagle from thy sky,
So nursed in fire, O Holy Land of ours!

THE DUAL LIFE

The sun was floating toward his evening port,
But here his beams had failed, so close the shade
Was woven round the rugged mountain road
That hour we trod together. Stalwart cliffs,
Piled up in sheeted precipices, hung
Impending over head, or stood aloof
And looked upon us darkly as we passed.
The track that coiled about their flinty feet —
A compromise with iron dignity,
Achieved by urgent muscles of past men
And flung to meet some haven down the vale —
Was carbuncled with rock and strewn with dust,
A gray and vicious salt that stung the throat
And wreaked its smarting venom on the eyes.
And on the nether flank, with frequent thrust
Of limestone pike and flinty spear-point, lay
The rabble refuse torn by that sore toil
From off the parent cliff. Gross plants there rose,
And vampire vines clung round in poisonous coils,
That springing caught and twined themselves about
The pinnacles of weed, and made a tent,
Storm-tanned and sere, to shelter that bad host.
And all around was dim and pierced with chill
At midday even. Darker now it was

As farther toward his haven sailed the sun ;
But over head a strip of tender sky
Shone blue between the hemlocks and the crags.

Then suddenly round an angle of the track
We broke upon a hunchback — one so wild,
So unimagined, so incredible
In his affliction that our human sense
Shrank instantly aside, as if ashamed
To know itself akin to such a form.
A giant's trunk piled massively on legs
Fine as a child's, that tottered with their load ;
Its head — if head it was the creature had —
Glimpsed o'er the swaying mountain of a hunch
Unkempt and huddled like a beggar's pack ;
Its clothing, of no shape, no color, naught
Save what resembled hideously a skin
Working in awful wrinkles as it walked,
Slunk round it vilely, powdered o'er with dust,
As sedge with multitudinous parasites, —
A shape most like a demon's ; and around
The gloom as of a prison without vent.

It heeded not our footsteps as we came,
And when, escaped from that grim coign of earth
Wherein our souls had breathed precarious air,

We broke into the brightness of the day,
Our feet charged on to pass the creature by,
That we might gain the valley,— and forgot.
But as we passed it, see ! it lifted up
Slowly, amid the horror of its shape,
An angel's face before us ! Features drawn
In lines of tenderest sensibility
Beamed on us with a light of other worlds ;
And cloudless eyes smiled forth caressingly
In gentle recognition ; and the brow,
Curled round with locks all golden like a god's
Was bright with fine intelligence, and smooth
With the perpetual flow of radiant thoughts
And impulses divine, — a seraph's head
Set on a demon's trunk ; and o'er it shone
The incomparable blessing of the sun.
And through the charm that flowed about the lips
Issued in words the greeting of the hour,
And such a voice ! O would the world had more
Of speech divine as this ! Consummate tone
Flushed high with breathing music of a soul
That sang through it as through an instrument.
With thrilling voices such as this, O earth,
Sing — sing to us ! and we with softest steps
Will follow thee forever where thou wilt !

And we responded with an equal heart
Though not with equal music, as we bowed
And so passed on — but not until our souls
Had lower bowed before a human spirit
In earth-long bondage lovely to the last.
And while I mused thereon with many thoughts,
Out of his instant wisdom spake my friend —
“What meaning do you gather from this book,
This strange epistle we've been set to read,
New from some master's hand to speed our growth?”
And I replied — “Three books of God there are,
Through which He speaks to us — His written truth
For all sane souls and noble to enjoy ;
The picture-book of nature to instruct
The child-man, pleased with such a glorious show ;
And last, the rugged volume known as man,
Most intricate in wisdom for the world,
Most tantalizing, and the most misread.
These are the books of God ; and, of the last,
Today a shining page is rendered clear
To our slow understanding, and the text—
‘Look carefully behind the coarsest guise,
Brute earth may often veil the loveliest soul.’”
“You've traced the paragraph aright,” he said,
“But did you note how proud the seraph's head

Reigned o'er the ruined body? Strength, though mild,
Yet splendid, constant, irresistible,
Triumphant and immortal! How reads this,
Save that man's angel still is at the helm
Of this racked vessel of humanity,
However winds may quarrel, waters smite,
And some bright day shall guide it safe to port.
And which of these twain aspects, dual shapes,
Shall fast and final in our memory
Remain, to the forgetting of its mate—
The trunk, so fierce, repulsive and deformed,
Or the mild radiance of the seraph's face?

"So shall the jewel of man's soul, being first,
Burn off its earthly matrix, leaving it
To sink and molder out of memory,
While she herself glows beauteous at the last."

GLIMPSES OF THE GOAL

“All things in springs of spirit have their rise,
All things in gulfs of spirit find their close ;
And onward the great stream of magic flows,
And every murmuring runnel forward flies
To swell the mightier marvel and surprise ;
Our lives are shadows which the Arch-Soul throws
O'er undulating gardens flushed with rose—
The glad world sown with splendor as the skies.
And time shall be when, greeting face to face,
No longer shall our eyes as now behold
Mere form and color and opacity,
But spirits postured in their native grace ;
When, tongues fallen useless while the worlds
waxed old,
Soul unto soul shall speak immediately.

“The flowers, the grass, the uncomplaining weed
Thy plowshare buries in soft sepulchres
Are creatures blest, and sweet interpreters
Of that small spirit biding in the seed ;
And thou the plowman stalking o'er the mead
A spirit art, and royal kin of hers,
Chief prophet made of beauty's ministers,
To preach through all the world a heavenly creed.

A lamp, alas ! whose flame forgets to burn ;
Priest — of a moldered altar, perished rite ;
Prophet — to nurse a tongueless prophecy ;
Seer — with blind eyes that nothing can discern !
Run, lovely fire ! flush eye and soul with light,
And sting the silence to a trumpet's glee !

“ How long wilt thou be kinsman to a clod,
The sloth-bound brother of the rock and tree,
Stolid, content in such society —
That merely, not a master, not a god ?
What edict dooms thee to espouse a sod
And bring forth lumpish children unto thee,
Blind in the lightning of futurity,
Dumb hands that burrow, and loose feet that plod ?
Awake and suffer ! Hath not man a soul —
Breath, wings, fire, harmony — a world that lies
Sublime within him, peerless, endless, whole,
A wonderland of beauty and surprise !
Wake heart and arm and come ! help us to roll
The glad sphere forward into happier skies !

“ Open thine eyes upon thy house and see
A fairy palace sparkling in the light,
Whose base is thrust 'mid mines of richest night,
Whose stones are miracle and mystery.

" Its beams are odors woven deliciously,
Its windows crystal leaves where winter's sprite
With brush of moonshine spreads his fancies white,
Its roof a cave of dreams and fantasy.
And in the midst thy hearthstone : — 'Tis the shrine
Where troop the household pilgrims, Thought,
Desire,
Crowned Love, and Memory, and golden Mirth ;
And wreathed around the hearthhead, O divine !
The thing of life and wonder men call fire,
Than which no creature lovelier walks the earth."'

'Twas thus he spoke of spirit. He had tried
The deeps where it abides and seen from thence
Outward on life its course and consequence,
And how on its free pinions all things ride.
He built his house where unseen workers plied
Their lucky tasks below the realms of sense ;
Their tracks ran to his door, and his from thence
Made forth to theirs fair pathways unespied.
In part he knew — not wholly yet enough
To say how near and natural to our tongue
Is that far-sought-for word that sets us free —
Free thoughts, free hands, to work the magic stuff
From which all worlds are made, all lives are
sprung —
The word we mean but say Simplicity.

PARADISAL GUARDS

A thousand mimic snakes did leap and fret
In arcs of silver down the bright lagoon,
Shed on the water by the laughing moon
And banked with cedar shadows black as jet.
“O what surpassing loveliness ! And yet
Were son of earth to paint it thus, how soon
Convention’s oaf would tramp with blundering shoon
Blind over all this beauty ! ” Sadness met
With rapture in his voice ! “ But nature’s end
Works in the sure enchantment and the gin
Set round the paths to her most glorious show
Lest uncouth spirits enter to offend,
As hounds that scratch and whine to be let in,
Only to stretch and slumber in the glow.”

THE CORE OF BEAUTY

Some lives are like a tavern largely planned,
That marks the world's great crossways, fore-
designed
To lodge all men, but which some chance unkind
Has plucked unfinished from the builder's hand ;
Gaunt doors by spiders' gusty drapery spanned
Are there, and walls with moldy tracery lined ;
Grim corners stuffed with rubbish out of mind,
And floors by whirling breezes swept and fanned ;
But in whose sheltered heart are rooms possessed
By some small household with its cherished store
Of life and love and things to both most dear.
And souls whose ruined chambers lodge no guest
Of nature's glorious train, may keep a door
To inner beauty rich beyond a peer.

FICTION AND TRUTH

He loved to roam the alleys of romance,
Through greenwood old, by many a glimmering
 stream
To slay a scaly dragon in a dream,
Or with a lumbering giant break a lance ;
And haply issuing suddenly to chance
On some old mossy castle all agleam
With magic sunset and the unearthly beam,
And catch perhaps a lovely lady's glance.
By such wild paths romantically spun
Does truth oftentimes arrive. Let poets bring
Dragon or dwarf, whatever fancy glean,
Fairy or fiend, she owns them every one ;
The wildest shapes that out of dreamland spring
Somewhere, sometime, the living world has seen.

THE KINGDOM OF NIGHT

The sun grows blithe amid the heart of May
When all the trees are out in richest guise,
And maiden flowers troop forth beneath gay skies
And hearts wax merry in the well-loved day.
Night is another world. There is a sway
Maintained in dim magnificence, that lies
Divided by a sunset from our eyes —
In strangeness, oh what endless leagues away !
True heirs are we of two large realms of earth,
Each alien from the other, both most fair,
Spread forth for high adventure and romance.
Day have we sacked to fill our grief and mirth,
But who has scaled the Dark King's topmost stair,
And from his watchtower stretched the
conquering lance ?

THE DREAM

Our dreams oftentimes are things of prophecy :
One faithful vision greets me year by year ;
It comes and lifts me through thin atmosphere
As sweeps an eagle in wide liberty.
Old forests flow beneath me like the sea ;
Far down the shrunken tracks of tilth appear ;
The mountains roll together ; far and clear
The cities gleam like toys of faërie.
How near the planets burn ! What star is this
Whose streaming fire that tossing cloud illumes ?
Ah, there come voices down the windy streams :—
'Tis Spirit breaking from the chrysalis,
The splendid creature clothed with sudden plumes
Stealing a foretaste of her joy in dreams.

FRIENDLY RIVALS

Come out, Sir Botany, let's go around
And pay our court to the fresh prince of May !
The wind's no more than a young hawk at play,
The sun is raining gold without a sound ;
The flowers are forth in troops upon the ground,
And there'll be plants for you to pluck and flay ;
So while you specialize their lives away
I'll woo with love the charm within them bound.
I know a lodge the striped Trilliums keep,
Shy mid the birches : — thither will I hie
And learn by heart-throbs what the head would
know.
At sunset-time we'll meet below the steep,
And tell our tale under the evening sky,
And mark which one the fairest spoil can show

SPRING RAIN

The soul grows wise that listens to the rain,
And in its sound rejoices in the night,
Filled full in every sense with calm delight,
And soothed away in rapture without pain.
Now it retreats! Hush! there it comes again,
Accumulating music till the might
Of its fresh transport trembles at its height —
To break and throb away with failing strain.
I know what tender brightness of the grass,
And what full-breath'd satiety of earth
Shall greet me in the morning when I rise ;
And I shall laugh to think what deeper glass
My soul has drained amid the night-long mirth —
The heart that drinks the midnight rain is wise.

A drop of gum upon the time-fed spruce,
A hundred years and then a flame of flower
Upon the century-plant. In Love's deep bower
One cup of rapture—one—a moment's truce
Amid the clamorous war of sense and use—
So goes it here! But where thou art this hour
Risen out of toil and nature, hast thou power,
O friend, to drink the unadulterate juice
All times for every thirst? And are thine eyes
Fed every hour and always with fresh blooms?
Thy balsams, run they balm from every vein?
And ever when thou wilt canst thou arise
And wrap thyself about in splendid glooms,
And drink the joy and freshness of the rain?

WOMAN

'Tis woman, woman, with us first and last,
And evermore 'tis woman to the end !
'Twas her dear lineaments that first we kenned
When out of nothing into light we passed ;
Twas her ideal image that so fast
Sped forth our feet love's devious ways to wend,
So far in fantasy without amend,
So deep amid youth's woe-in-glory cast.

She is the charm in all the world unique,
The sole unspoiled, immutable delight,
The vision still and talisman of age —
She fires the eye of eld, and all the cheek
Of time transfigures ; and 'tis she doth write
Anew love's poem on our life's last page.

PAN-MINSTREL

Behind the world's close-woven drapery,
 Unseen from this strict round wherein we're pent,
 Sits the wild minstrel on his art intent
Who pipes the music of humanity.
And now it is a gladsome melody,
 That makes the heart gush joy at every vent ;
 And now it is a lonesome-souled lament
That shakes the fruit of sorrow from life's tree.
And sometimes 'tis a trumpet's martial song
 Driving a race to war. More oft a lyre,
 That sings the sun of love down from the sky ;
And then a frenzy seizes on the throng,
 And men, like moths, rush on the gorgeous fire,
 None save that hidden player knowing why.

THE ROSE SPEAKS

I met a rose beside the forest walk,
And thus she spoke in musical complaint —
“The pleasant summer wanes as heretofore,
As heretofore my petals lose their hue,
And soon shall drop among the forest paths,
Scattered and blown around
By every wasteful breeze.
And yet he does not come, my deep-heart Knight;
‘Tis many weeks since I have seen his face,
And you can doubtless tell me where he is.
He had the eyes to see, the lips to praise,
The spirit and the heart to understand.
Others have come and gone,—
Have come and seen and praised —
Touched into looks and words of frankest love,
Beholding my imperial array —
Have come and seen and spoken and are gone ;
But none like him, my wise interpreter,
Who had the eyes to see and heart to know.
He knew the inner secret of my birth,
My growth and perfect life,
My fragrant gift supreme
Of beauty never matched by any flower.

"Where is he that he does not come? The winds
That rack my green pavilion, and break through
With strong assaults, and with unknightly act
Ruffle my queenly vesture, and my crown,
My chief and royal diadem, despoil
Of some its rarest gems,
By rankest envy fired,—
The winds, have they not struck him on the wave,
O'erthrown his craft and sunk his body deep
And laid it glimmering on its sheeny bed
Below the smiling falseness of the waves?
No — for he was superior to these,
Such knowledge had he. Them he made his slaves
To push his fearless shallop o'er the lake,
While he sat grandly smiling at their toil.
Nor do I think the flood has swallowed him,
So many charms he had to spoil its power,
When it was plagued with appetite for men,
And passion to devour
As in the elder days,
When men were feeble, not the gods they are.
Nor has the red fire burned him that he died,
Because he held a whip above the fire,
To tame it when it broke beyond its cage.

Alas ! I am afraid purblind disease,
That blights in time all life upon the earth,
And knows no difference 'twixt rose and man—
I am afraid it may have fallen on him.
It may have smitten him,
Because it creeps unseen,
And feeds the hands of Death stretched through the
world,
Aiming at desolation. Not men-gods
Can stand that arm insensate when it strikes,
Guided by that high Mind
Which wills and asks no man—
The Mind we love and yet whose acts we hate.

“ You stand there wondering
To hear my voice so faint ;
But I am dying slow into my grave ;
And you can tell me plainly ere I go,
That I may go contented, where he is.

“ O I remember there were two of them
That used to come together to my realm
In early summer. Wondrous friends they were,
And loving comrades. They would come along,
Shoulder to shoulder, pressing toward my place,
Eyes everywhere for beauty as they came,—

One vast and dark and hairy as the wolf,
One lithe and light and eager as the leopard.
I can recall their very looks and words,
And what high talk they held
Of things beyond the rose.
And they drew near and praised me to my face,
Till all my nature more divinely blushed.
Whereat they praised me more—and praise I love :
Each thing that lives by beauty loveth praise,
Praise is the natural portion of the rose. . . .

“ My voice did fail me there,
My voice and memory !
Forgive me if a moment I forgot,
For I am dying softly to my grave.
Therefore make haste and tell me where he is
Who so divinely has divined my life
Next to the one who made it. It was love,
The secret of all secrets, grew with him,
Till every flower he read
By the clear lens of love.

“ Oh tell me, you his comrade, where he's gone,
And what he does away from here so long !
For now the fires of August flush the land,
And he has stayed away so many months :
And other creatures wonder as do I,
And miss him as the days pass and he stays.

The toad that stumbles sometimes round my roots
In the hot evenings, taking with his tongue —
All fire, as is his body all inert —
The harmful insect things that prey on me,
The toad he loved, and often spoke of him,
Calling him Jewel-Eye and Lightning-Tongue,
Seeing his beauty there
And not the ugliness.
As the great Maker made him, thus he saw.
And the strange snake that trickles through the grass
Like little rills of water all at once,
And startles with his motion — him he loved,
Laughed at the tongue let out like slender flame,
And at the hiss men hate
But do not understand,
Mistaking that for venom which is fear.
He saw but beauty in him, and the law
That made him lithe and wonderful of mold
And graceful and most delicate to glide.
He called him Glance-o'-Wonder. He would sit
And watch him for a long time bathe himself
In sun-showers, coiled upon a gray old stone,
And gained his confidence and caught his love,
Until all fear of him had passed away.
And he became his friend,

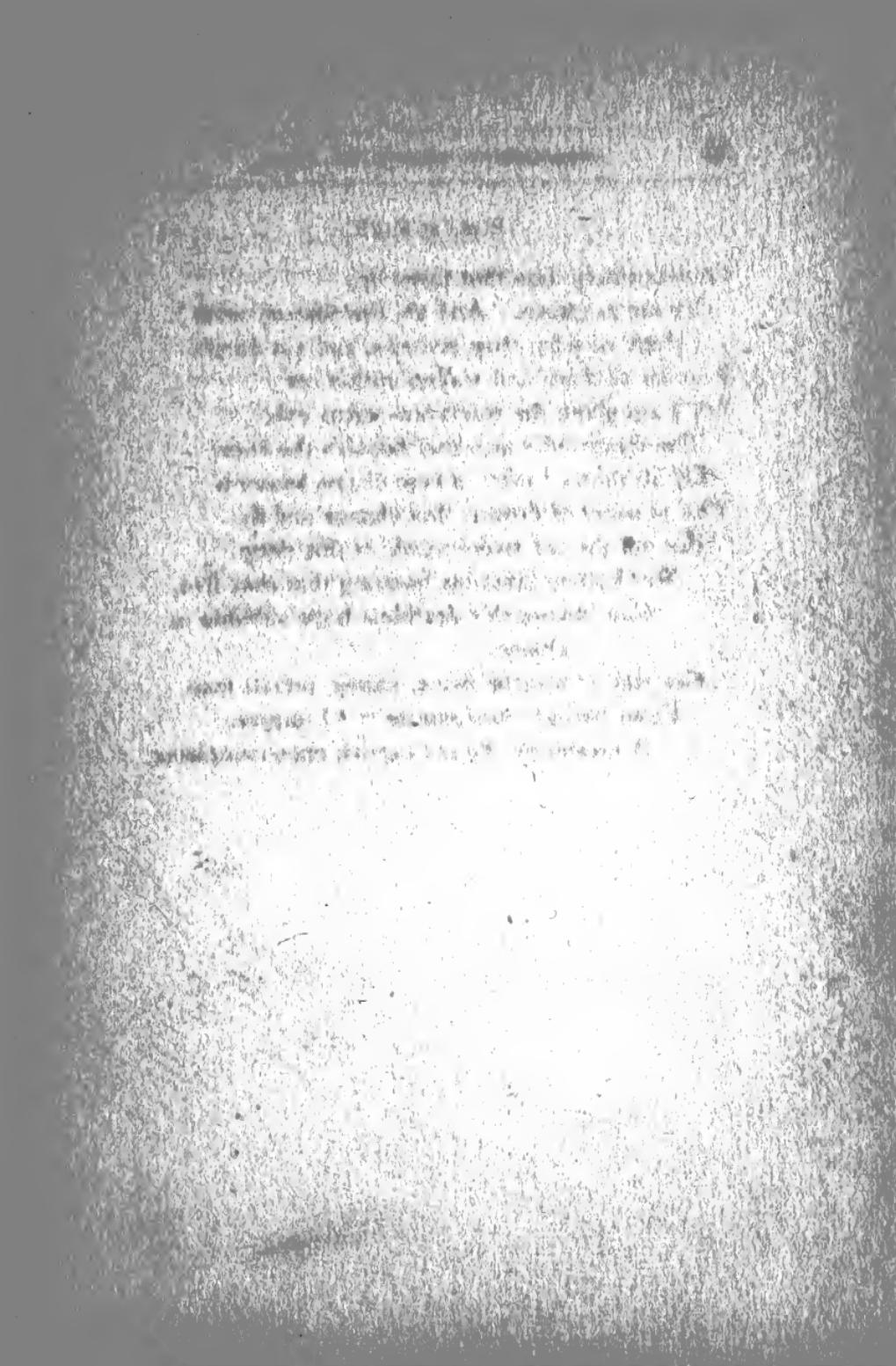
And watched to see him come
Large through the foliage, making for my place,
To which he daily came — but comes no more.

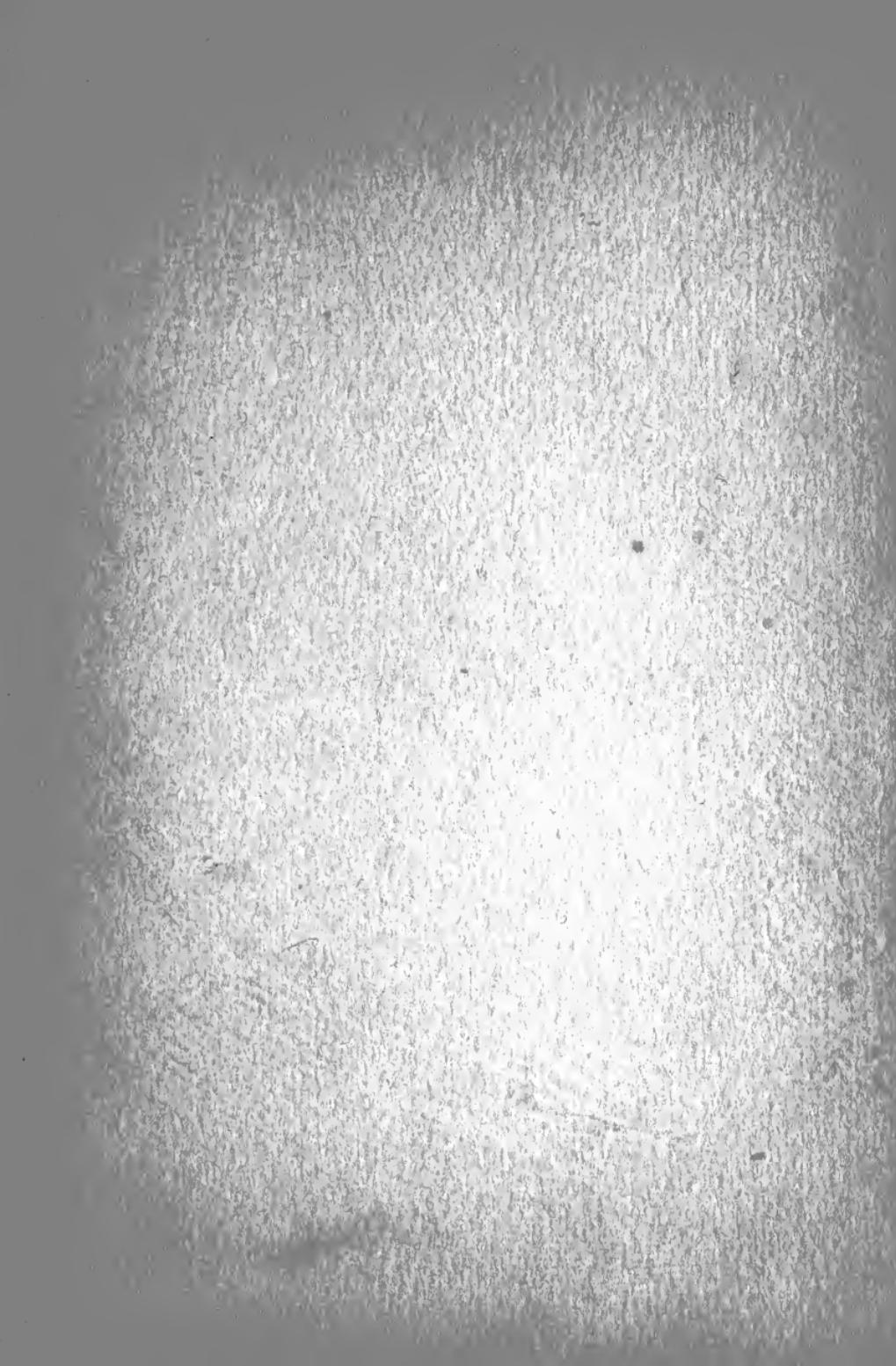
“ But I’ve forgotten and have wandered off
Unwitting from the purpose of my speech.
More strong I feel the change upon me now ;
And I must soon be gone,
O’ertaken, changed, turned back,
Sent groping downward to my hidden root,
Spell-bound in trance for months amid the mold :
My court broke up and all my courtiers gone,
The Violet and the meek Anemone,
Wood-Apple, and the stripèd Trillium ;
The Bee, hot-hearted, and the Dragon-Fly,
The spring birds and the beasts, all full of life
And new-year glory — they shall all be gone.
Shall he not once return,
Once more before all’s o’er,
And sit within my royal tent of leaves,
And speak about my going with regret,
And plan for better times another year,
When the new Spring comes in ; while I trim up
My few and fading petal-lamps to light
The full but farewell banquet of our love ?”

"He was a prince," I said,
"And a prince is born to care;
The way his feet are led
Is like a thought's in air;
Sudden his flight and far
Sometimes to his wide realm's bound
And his track is the trail of a star
Soon lost in night's profound;
The soul that would hunt his track
Would even go wide or blind,—
'Tis a path of mist or a cloud's vain wrack
Where ride the lords of mind."

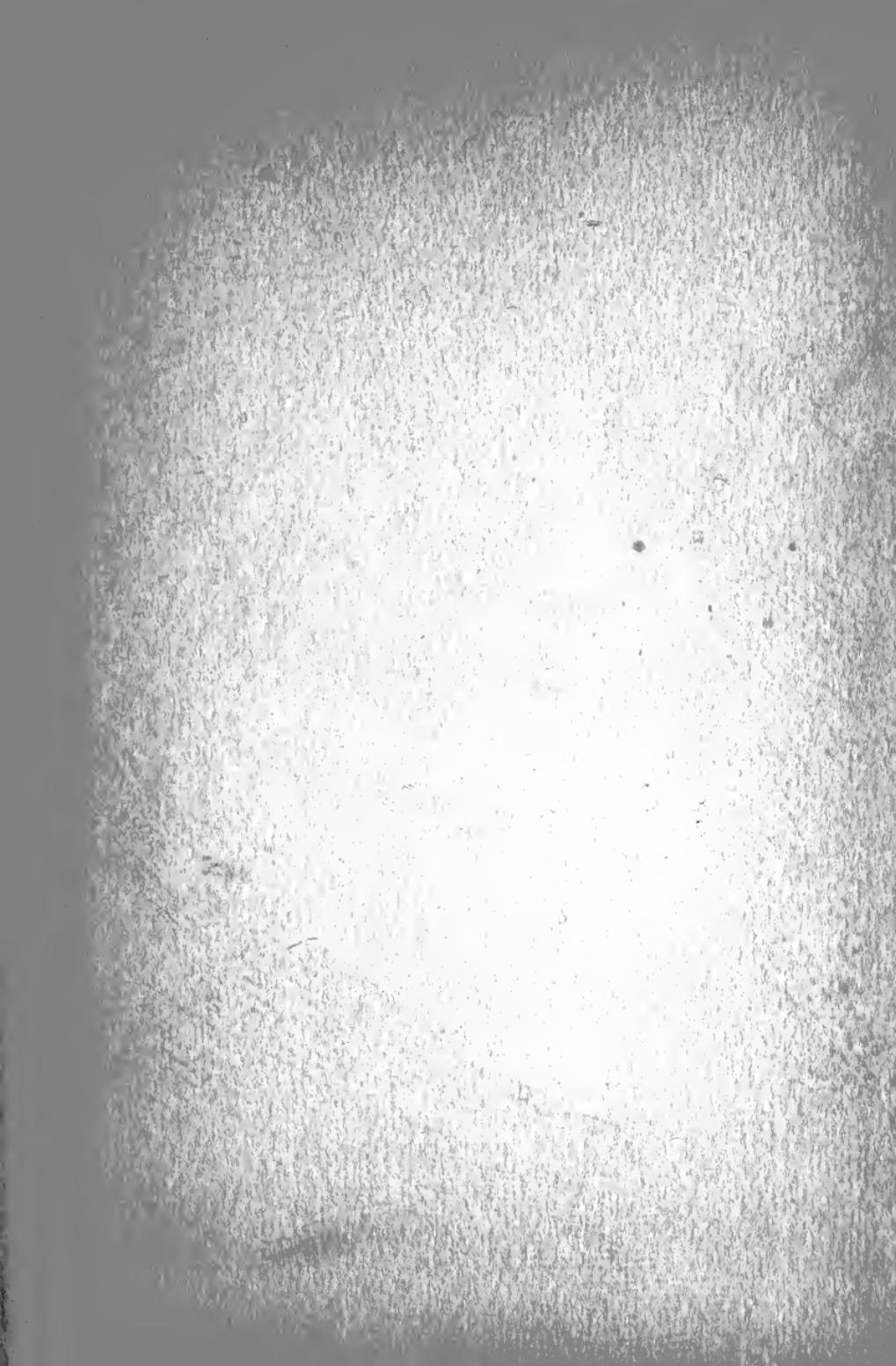
POSTSCRIPT

O melancholy days that falter by,
Ye are as ghosts. And ah, the ones to come !
I think of what they promise, and am dumb,
I dream of them and waken with a cry ;
For I am given the much-too-seeing eye,
The mournful vision that beholds the sum
Of all things vanity, whose chains benumb
This prisoner of dreams that change and fly.
But not the sad sweet music of this sleep,
Nor hollow fantasms boasting that they live,
Can change this deathless hope sublime in
chains ;
Nor stay at last the fierce, strong, joyous leap
From twilight into sunrise — O forgive,
If meantime the sad captive once complains









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